

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

of

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and

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for

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR IN-SERVICE DYNAMIC ALLOCATION OF
BANDWIDTH IN A TDM NETWORK**

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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR IN-SERVICE DYNAMIC ALLOCATION OF BANDWIDTH IN A TDM NETWORK

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. The Field of the Invention

[0002] This invention relates to a method and apparatus for allocating bandwidth in a TDM network (e.g., STS-1s in a SONET (synchronous optical network) / SDH (synchronous digital hierarchy) network), amongst clients, on an in-service (i.e., without any interruption in the transport of data) and dynamic basis.

2. The Relevant Technology

[0003] Time Division Multiplexing (TDM) protocols such as SONET/SDH are used in optical fibre networks to transport data across the network. The SONET protocol enables data to be aggregated from several tributaries in a simple manner but the allocation or re-allocation of bandwidth between the tributaries is more difficult to accomplish with this protocol.

[0004] A SONET signal (i.e., such as STS-48, meaning 48 synchronous transport streams) is typically composed of multiple STS-1's which are assigned to various resources or clients, with the greater the number of STS-1's representing increased bandwidth. Advantageously, the assignment of bandwidth to each client is flexible in that it can be assigned and changed

based on any number of applied control parameters. An aggregator aggregates (i.e., combines) the client STS-1's into a composite STS payload (e.g., STS-48 or STS-192) and the aggregate data stream is fed into a SONET transmit framer to insert section/line/path overhead information (data) and create a proper SONET frame.

[0005] The tributary data for SONET networks is typically encoded (for example, using HDLC) in such a manner as to differentiate between payload data and control codes used for signaling. In addition most encoding schemes are also encapsulation schemes in that they provide control codes for delineating the start and end of frames.

[0006] Typically, reallocating the STS-1's amongst the clients is done by re-provisioning, whereby the data channel between the clients of the transmit and receive nodes must be taken out of service, resulting in an interruption of communications and service. The proposed LCAS (Link Capacity Adjustment Scheme) standard for SONET provides a method for reallocating bandwidth using virtual concatenation but this method is relatively complex. Moreover, this method may not allow for optimum recovery in the event that a protection switch occurs during a reallocation of bandwidth.

[0007] Known methods for in-service bandwidth reallocation depend on the occurrence of synchronized events at each of the transmit and receive nodes of the data transport link (the transmit node being within a source device and the receive node being within a sink device). Consequently, since one such event (e.g., a reallocation "switch trigger") might be lost or corrupted by or during a protection switch event, these methods are vulnerable to protection switching

events which may produce severe data errors (resulting from an inability of the sink device to correctly extract the data) and/or interfere with successful completion of a reallocation process.

[0008] There is a need, therefore, for means to reallocate STS-1's amongst clients on an in-service and dynamic basis without interference by the occurrence of a protection switching event.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] In accordance with the invention there is provided a method for reallocating bandwidth used by a data tributary comprising data units, during transport of the data tributary over a communications link by a time division multiplexing (TDM) frame from a source device to a sink device. Each data unit occupies one time slot of the frame and the data units are encoded to differentiate between payload data and control codes. At the source device, a designated code is inserted in each unallocated time slot to identify that the time slot contains no payload data (the designated codes being ignored by the sink device). New set(s) of time slots to be allocated or de-allocated to the tributary are determined. The new set(s) of time slots are communicated to the sink device. Confirmation of the communication is received from the sink device. If the new set(s) of time slots are being allocated to the tributary, the data units are inserted into the new set(s) of time slots allocated to the tributary. If the new set(s) of time slots are being de-allocated to the tributary, the insertion of data units is discontinued for the new set(s) of time slots de-allocated to the tributary. Both the inserting or discontinuing of insertion of data units into the new set(s) of time slots commences upon the confirmation receipt.

[0010] The TDM frame for the illustrated preferred embodiment is a SONET frame and, thus, the set(s) of time slots are STS-1s. Insertion of the designated codes is performed by a mapper of the source device and the designated codes are terminated in a demapper of the sink device. The bandwidth of the tributary is increased when the new set(s) of time slots are allocated to the data tributary

and the bandwidth of the tributary is decreased when the new set(s) of time slots are de-allocated to the data tributary.

[0011] For an embodiment using 8b/9b encoding each data unit comprises 9 bits consisting of an 8 bit information octet, being either a control octet or a data octet, and one octet type bit identifying the octet as control or data. In this embodiment the data units are mapped, in a cyclic manner, into each the new STS-1 allocated thereto by mapping the information octets of each sequence of 8 data units to eight of a sequence of nine contiguous timeslots of each the new STS-1 and mapping the octet type bits for each the mapped sequence of information octets to a ninth octet of the contiguous time slots of each the new STS-1.

[0012] For an alternate embodiment in which data tributaries are encoded using the HDLC protocol, the protocol is modified so that the designated code is escaped where it appears in payload data units.

[0013] In accordance with a further aspect of the invention there is provided an apparatus within a mapper/damapper for reallocating bandwidth used by a data tributary comprising data units during transport of the data tributary over a communications link by a time division multiplexing (TDM) frame from a source device to a sink device. Each data unit occupies one time slot of the frame and the data units are encoded to differentiate between payload data and control codes. Each of the source and sink devices comprise the apparatus. A designated code generator is configured for generating and inserting into each unallocated time slot a designated code to identify that the time slot contains no payload data (and the apparatus is configured to ignore the designated codes

received at the sink device). A bandwidth re-allocation identifier is configured for identifying new set(s) of time slots to be allocated or de-allocated to the tributary. A bandwidth re-allocation signaller is configured for communicating to the sink device the new set(s) of time slots and for receiving confirmation of the communication from the sink device. A data unit inserter is configured for inserting the data units into the new set(s) of time slots allocated to the tributary, if the new set(s) of time slots are being allocated to the tributary, and for discontinuing insertion of the data units into the new set(s) of time slots de-allocated to the tributary, if the new set(s) of time slots are being de-allocated to the tributary, wherein the inserting or discontinuing insertion of data units into the new set(s) of time slots is commenced upon the confirmation receipt.

[0014] The TDM frame may be a SONET frame whereby the set(s) of time slots are STS-1s. An apparatus according to claim 9 configured to ignore the designated codes received at the sink device. When an encoding method is used which produces data units comprising 9 bits consisting of an 8 bit information octet, being either a control octet or a data octet, and one octet type bit identifying the octet as control or data, the apparatus further comprises a cyclical mapping component configured for mapping the data units, in a cyclic manner, into each the new STS-1 allocated thereto whereby the information octets of each sequence of 8 data units are mapped to eight of a sequence of nine contiguous timeslots of each the new STS-1 and the octet type bits for each the mapped sequence of information octets is mapped to a ninth octet of the contiguous time slots of each the new STS-1.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] Reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings which show, by way of example, an exemplary preferred embodiment of the present invention:

[0016] Figures 1(a) and (b) illustrate an exemplary method of encoding tributary data, namely, encoding the tributary data into an HDLC protocol frame (per Figure 1(a)) for processing by a mapper and aggregator to multiplex the data into a SONET frame;

[0017] Figure 2 shows, for purposes of instruction only, a mapping of an HDLC frame sequence into a single STS-1;

[0018] Figure 3 illustrates, for purposes of instruction only, a mapping of an HDLC frame sequence into six STS-1s of a SONET frame which is N x STS-1 wide, whereby the mapping is done on a non-sequentially concatenated frame basis using STS-1 numbers 2, 5, 10, 11, 12 and N-1;

[0019] Figures 4(a) and (b) are flowcharts showing the steps performed by the apparatus of the source device, according to the invention, to re-allocate bandwidth, Figure 4(a) showing the steps performed to increase bandwidth by two STS-1s (viz. nos. 5 and 9) and Figure 4(b) showing the steps performed to decrease bandwidth by two STS-1s (viz. nos. 5 and 9);

[0020] Figures 5 and 6 pertain to an alternate embodiment which maps the 8-bit/9-bit (8b/9b) encoded data (rather than applying HDLC encoding) wherein Figure 5 illustrates a data/control byte sequence for 8b/9b encoding; and,

[0021] Figure 6 illustrates a method for mapping 8b/9b encoded sequences into an STS-1 x N SONET frame.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0022] As shown by Figures 1-3, 8b/9b client data may be encoded using an encapsulation protocol such as HDLC and then mapped into an STS-n SONET frame using an 8b STS-n mapper. On the other hand, no encapsulation is necessary if a 9-bit STS-n mapper (not shown) is used to map the 8b/9b client data, in which case the 8b/9b data at stage "B" shown in Figure 1(b), consisting of 8 data bits and 1 control bit, is fed directly into a 9-bit STS-n mapper. However, independent of the encoding used (HDLC or 8b/9b), it is necessary to be able to differentiate the 8 bits of data from special control codes. When the HDLC protocol is used, the user data is prefixed with a special code to "escape" user data that looks like a control code.

[0023] Mapping of HDLC encoded frames is straightforward and is illustrated by Figures 1-3 as follows. Figures 1 (a) and (b) show an encoding of an exemplary tributary HDLC protocol frame (per Figure 1(a)) for processing by an 8-bit STS-n mapper and aggregator to multiplex the data into a SONET frame. As is well-known by persons skilled in the art, HDLC framing is done by an HDLC encoder utilizing octet stuffing (as necessary) to ensure that the frame content never matches the frame delineation flag in value. A flag sequence of an HDLC frame is a binary sequence used for frame synchronization, the address field is a double octet, the control field is a single octet identifying the frame type (i.e., client data, primitive sequence, client path messaging or path flow management) and an optional control frame type field identifies the type of control frame (used only when the frame type is path messaging or flow

management). The data field's organization is dependent upon the type of frame it is: client data frames may have FC or GbE frames embedded in them, for example, whereas path messaging or flow management frames would normally have a fixed length and content type according to the type of frame. A frame check sequence (FCS) field (also referred to as the Cyclical Redundancy Check (CRC)) defaults to 16 bits (two octets) and is calculated over all bits of the address, control, control frame type and data fields. Figures 2 and 3 are provided to show the method of mapping HDLC frame sequences into a SONET frame, as is well known in the art; Figure 2 shows a simple mapping of an HDLC frame sequence into a single STS-1 and Figure 3 shows a mapping of an HDLC frame sequence into six STS-1s of a SONET frame which is N x STS-1 wide (i.e., STS-n mapping) whereby the mapping is done on a non-sequentially concatenated frame basis using STS-1 numbers 2, 5, 10, 11, 12 and N-1.

[0024] For a 9-bit mapper implementation (i.e., an alternate embodiment in which HDLC encoding is not used), the information characters input to the mapper are 9-bit units converted from the client input line code (e.g., FC or GbE) as follows. The 8b10b structure of the input line code is converted by a converter to 8 bits of information, being the first 8 bits of the character, and 1 "SCGI" (special code group identifier) bit, being the 9th bit of the character, identifying the type of that information (i.e., control or data type). Thus, an information character comprises an 8 bit value (which may be any value from 0 - 256) and one octet type bit which identifies that value type as either control or data. For this implementation, it is necessary that a 9-bit mapper be used and

[illegible]

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performed by the apparatus to increase bandwidth by two STS-1s (nos. 5 and 9) and Figure 4(b) shows the steps performed by the apparatus to decrease bandwidth by two STS-1s (nos. 5 and 9).

[0027] For the example of increasing bandwidth (as shown by Figure 4(a)) the STS-1s to be added (5 and 9) are initially unallocated; thus, they carry the IGNORE code which has been inserted into all unallocated timeslots by the designated code generator of the mapper/demapper. A bandwidth re-allocation identifier of the mapper/demapper is configured for identifying new set(s) of time slots to be allocated to the tributary, the set(s) of time slots being STSs 5 and 9 in this example. A bandwidth re-allocation signaller of the apparatus sends a message to the sink device (i.e., the egress side), via a signalling channel, identifying that STS-1s 5 and 9 now belong to the tributary. It is to be noted that, at this time, the IGNORE code is being received by the sink device on two of the five STS-1s belonging to the tributary; however, these are "filtered out" (i.e., ignored) during demapping. The bandwidth re-allocation signaller then awaits an acknowledgement from the sink device (via a signalling channel) that the bandwidth increase has been performed. Thereafter, a data unit inserter of the mapper/demapper commences (at any time) to insert data units into the new set(s) of time slots being allocated to the tributary (i.e., STS-1s 5 and 9).

[0028] For the example of decreasing bandwidth (as shown by Figure 4(b)) the STS-1s to be removed (5 and 9) begin, on the ingress side, to carry the IGNORE code instead of payload data. As stated, this IGNORE code is filtered out by the demapper on the egress side. The bandwidth re-allocation signaller sends a message to the egress side (via a signalling channel) identifying that

the STSs to be de-allocated (i.e., STSs 5 and 9 identified by the bandwidth re-allocation identifier) no longer belong to the tributary. On receipt of this message the sink device no longer regards these STS-1s as being part of the tributary. The bandwidth re-allocation signaller then awaits an acknowledgement from the sink device (via a signalling channel) that the bandwidth decrease has been performed. Thereafter the data unit inserter discontinues inserting data units into the new set(s) of time slots being de-allocated to the tributary (i.e., STSs 5 and 9) and the ingress side may use the de-allocated STS-1s (5 and 9) for other purposes (i.e., they now become unallocated).

[0029] The acknowledgement signalling consists of a simple "ping". Optionally, however, for further robustness, it may repeat back the instructed modification and await from the source device either an acknowledgement that this repeat is correct or, if the returned instruction is incorrect, a re-transmission of the instructed allocation modification.

[0030] It will be understood from the foregoing description of the bandwidth allocation method that no real-time synchronization is required between the ingress and egress sides. Although the sequence of the steps for bandwidth allocation is important, the time required for each step to occur is not. Advantageously, this provides robustness to the data link. In the event that a protection switch were to occur while the steps are being performed data and/or signalling messages indicating/confirming an allocation modification may be lost; however, a high-level protocol on the message channel will ensure such messages are re-sent. In the meantime, no data is transported over the newly

allocated (or de-allocated) timeslots of a tributary, until end-to-end confirmation of the intended modification is in hand; following that, data may be inserted to/removed from the allocated/de-allocated timeslots following an arbitrary delay.

[0031] For 9-bit encoding (i.e., where an HDLC encoder is not used), a mapping algorithm is applied by a mapper to map each sequence of eight 9-bit characters input to the mapper to a sequence of nine octets of an STS-1 of the SPE, wherein the first eight octets correspond to the values of the eight characters and the ninth octet comprises the input octet type bit for each of those eight values to identify them as control or data values as shown by Figure 5. Figure 6 illustrates the method used to map the 8-bit byte/SCGI byte encoded sequences (per Figure 5) into an STS-1 x N SONET frame.

[0032] In order to support the bandwidth allocation method the timeslot mapping algorithm employed must be suitably adapted to the encoding protocol used (or vice versa). The encoding protocol must remain functional even when there is some uncertainty as to which STS-1s are assigned to a given tributary, as will occur during re-allocation (i.e., certain STS-1s will be considered part of the tributary by the source device and not the sink device, or vice versa, during bandwidth reallocation). Specifically, it is necessary to ensure that SCGIs are correctly recognized as such by the sink device and that they are properly correlated at the sink device with data bytes so that true data bytes, IGNORE codes, and other special codes are correctly interpreted.

[0033] The mapping method shown by Figure 6, for 8-bit/9-bit byte encoding, supports the present bandwidth allocation method of the invention. Nine-bit bytes are fed in a cyclic manner, by a cyclical mapping component of the mapper, to several, parallel SCGI byte encoders, one per active (i.e., not transmitting IGNORE bytes) STS-1 allocated to the client. Therefore, the assembled byte sequences for each parallel encoder are exclusively packed into their corresponding, specific STS-1s. In this way, integrity of encoding is maintained within specific STS-1s. The correct sequence for data reconstruction from the sink is clear and unambiguous, since the sequence of transmission of STS-1 slots within a SONET frame is rigorously defined and unvarying. It is to be noted that it is not appropriate to use a mapping method which would simply assign the 8-bit byte plus SCGI (clumped bit) byte sequences into available STS-1 slots as they come up because for the bandwidth reallocation method of this invention the specific STS-1s containing SCGI bytes will then vary unless the number of STS-1s allocated to a tributary is an integral multiple of nine.

[0034] It is to be understood that the method claimed herein is implemented by software in the preferred embodiment, and the elements of the apparatus claimed herein are in the form of software, but the invention is not intended to be limited to such implementations and for different embodiments different implementations may be elected as appropriate.

[0035] The individual electronic, software and processing functions utilised in the foregoing described preferred embodiment are, individually, well understood by those skilled in the art. It is to be understood by the reader that a variety of

other implementations may be devised by skilled persons for substitution. Persons skilled in the field of communication design will be readily able to apply the present invention to an appropriate implementation method for a given application.

[0036] Consequently, it is to be understood that the particular embodiments shown and/or described herein by way of illustration are not intended to limit the scope of the invention claimed by the inventors which is defined by the appended claims.